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PTQ9232

RELEASED IN PART  
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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CTME-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00
	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	ITC-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00
	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/008W			

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R 121942Z JUL 02  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6722  
INFO NSC WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 002012

USCINCSO FOR POLAD  
NSC FOR MAISTO AND SALCEDO; INR FOR FERNANDEZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/12  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE  
SUBJECT: POLLSTER SAYS CHAVEZ'S SUPPORT STILL HOLDING

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE FREDERICK B. COOK. REASONS 1.5 (B) &  
(D)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (U) DR. ALFREDO KELLER TOLD CHARGE AND POLOFFS ON JUNE 10 THAT, DESPITE MONTHS OF BAD ECONOMIC NEWS, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ'S POPULAR SUPPORT HASN'T SUFFERED, ACCORDING TO HIS LATEST POLL COMPLETED IN EARLY JULY. SINCE JANUARY, IN FACT, CHAVEZ'S SUPPORT HAS STEADILY INCREASED, FROM ABOUT 25 PERCENT TO 37 PERCENT. PARADOXICALLY, THIS HAS ALSO OCCURRED WHILE THE POPULARITY OF HIS GOVERNMENT HAS PLUMMETED. IN SHORT, 80 PERCENT OF VENEZUELAN ARE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, AND ALMOST 40 PERCENT ARE FOR CHAVEZ.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS  
DATE/CASE ID: 25 APR 2005 200400109

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KELLER GRIMLY NOTED THAT NOW 50 PERCENT OF VENEZUELAN BELIEVE A COUP--AND 56 PERCENT BELIEVE A CIVIL WAR--IS LIKELY TO BREAK OUT. BECAUSE THE CRISIS IS "ALL ABOUT CHAVEZ," KELLER SAW LITTLE BASIS FOR DIALOGUE BUT STRONG SUPPORT FOR AN ELECTORAL SOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

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GREATER POLARIZATION  
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2. (U) DR. ALFREDO KELLER TOLD CHARGE AND POLOFFS ON JUNE 10 THAT, DESPITE MONTHS OF BAD ECONOMIC NEWS, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ'S POPULAR SUPPORT HASN'T SUFFERED, ACCORDING TO HIS LATEST POLL COMPLETED IN EARLY JULY. SINCE JANUARY, IN FACT, CHAVEZ'S SUPPORT HAS STEADILY INCREASED, FROM ABOUT 25 PERCENT TO 37 PERCENT. HE NOTED THAT SINCE APRIL CHAVEZ HAS GAINED FIVE POINTS, WHILE THE OPPOSITION, NOW AT 39

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PERCENT, HAS LOST TEN. OF THOSE 24 PERCENT WHO DECLARE THEMSELVES NEUTRAL, THERE IS A CONSIDERABLE ANTI-CHAVEZ DISPOSITION. HE CONCLUDED THAT VENEZUELA IS NOW EVEN MORE POLARIZED THAN IT WAS BEFORE APRIL 11.

3. (U) NEITHER THE NATION'S ECONOMIC ILLS NOR THE GENERAL PERCEPTION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS PLUMMETED DRAMATICALLY SINCE HE FIRST TOOK OFFICE, HAVE AFFECTED CHAVEZ'S SUPPORT. PARADOXICALLY, ALTHOUGH ALMOST 40 PERCENT ARE STILL FOR CHAVEZ, NOW 80 PERCENT OF VENEZUELAN ARE AGAINST HIS GOVERNMENT. (KELLER TOLD A PERSONAL ANECDOTE ABOUT HIS TRYING TO RENEW HIS VENEZUELAN PASSPORT AND BEING TOLD THAT ONLY 20 ARE ISSUED EACH DAY, DESPITE DAILY CLAIMANTS OF OVER 1,000. MANY VENEZUELAN ARE TURNING TO THE BLACK MARKET TO DEAL WITH THIS SHORTAGE.) BASED ON THE RESPONSES OF FOCUS GROUPS, KELLER THOUGHT THAT CHAVEZ'S STEADY SUPPORT OWES SOMETHING TO THE NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OPPOSITION, WHICH LOST SOME CREDIBILITY IN APRIL AND HAS NOT COALESCED AROUND AN EFFECTIVE LEADER.

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GRIM EXPECTATIONS  
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4. (U) KELLER STATED THAT 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION BELIEVE ANOTHER COUP IS PROBABLE AND THAT, MORE ALARMINGLY, 56 PERCENT THINK A CIVIL WAR IS ALSO PROBABLE. THIRTY-FOUR PERCENT SAID THEY WOULD PARTICIPATE IN A CIVIL WAR, WITH 18 PERCENT CLAIMING TO FIGHT FOR THE OPPOSITION AND 16 PERCENT FOR CHAVEZ. BECAUSE THE NUMBERS THAT CHAVEZ HIMSELF, AND

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NOT ANY POLICY ISSUES, IS THE FOCUS OF THE POLITICAL  
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DEBATE, THE POLLSTER CONCLUDED THAT THIS LEFT LITTLE HOPE  
FOR MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE.

5. (U) BUT WHAT ABOUT AN ELECTORAL SOLUTION? KELLER  
THOUGHT THIS OFFERED MORE POSSIBILITIES. SIXTY-TWO PERCENT  
FAVOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO CUT CHAVEZ'S TERM OF  
OFFICE AND HOLD ELECTIONS AND 54 PERCENT THINK THIS SHOULD  
INCLUDE A SECOND ROUND. ONLY 52 PERCENT THINK THAT CHAVEZ  
SHOULD RESIGN, AGAINST 41 PERCENT. HE ADDED THAT 52  
PERCENT WOULD VOTE FOR ANY OPPOSITION CANDIDATE AGAINST  
CHAVEZ (IT WAS 63 PERCENT IN DECEMBER) AND 34 PERCENT WOULD  
BACK CHAVEZ (UP FROM 25 PERCENT IN DECEMBER.) A RECALL OF  
CHAVEZ, WHICH COULD BE HELD AT THE EARLIEST IN AUGUST 2003,  
WOULD HAVE 57 PERCENT IN FAVOR, 43 PERCENT OPPOSED. KELLER  
POINTED OUT THAT, DESPITE THE STRONG VOTE AGAINST CHAVEZ,  
IT PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE SUFFICIENT TO SURPASS THE THRESHOLD  
THAT WOULD FORCE HIM FROM OFFICE.

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CHAVISMO VICIMIZES THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS  
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6. (U) TAKING A BROADER PERSPECTIVE ON VENEZUELAN POLITICS,  
KELLER DISCUSSED HOW CHAVEZ DISRUPTED THE COUNTRY'S

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CTME-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 002012

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/12

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE

SUBJECT: POLLSTER SAYS CHAVEZ'S SUPPORT STILL HOLDING

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL DEMOCRAT/SOCIAL CHRISTIAN POLITICAL  
POLARITY. IN 1988, 44 PERCENT OF VENEZUELANES IDENTIFIED  
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WITH THE AD PARTY, AND 34 PERCENT WITH COPEI.  
(INDEPENDENTS, 18 PERCENT; THE LEFT, 4 PERCENT.) IN 1998,  
THE YEAR OF CHAVEZ'S ELECTION, 27 PERCENT CALLED THEMSELVES  
CHAVISTAS, 17 PERCENT SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, 22 PERCENT SOCIAL  
CHRISTIANS, AND 30 PERCENT INDEPENDENT.

7. (U) NOW CHAVISMO COMMANDS 26 PERCENT, THE CENTER (SOCIAL  
DEMOCRAT/SOCIAL CHRISTIAN/MODERATE LEFT) 36 PERCENT, AND  
INDEPENDENTS 38 PERCENT, WITH 8 PERCENT OF THOSE LEANING  
TOWARD CHAVISMO AND 15 PERCENT TOWARD THE CENTER. BUT  
KELLER DOES NOT CONCLUDE THAT THE CENTER IS SOLID OR  
CAPABLE OF UNITING. THE OLD SOCIAL DEMOCRAT/SOCIAL  
CHRISTIAN DIVISIONS ARE STILL PROFOUND, AND PEOPLE IN ONE  
TENDENCY WILL TYPICALLY NOT ACCEPT THE LEADERSHIP FROM  
ANOTHER. HE BROKE THE CENTER DOWN IN THIS MANNER:

--SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (PROYECTO VENEZUELA, PRIMERO JUSTICIA,  
COPEI, CONVERGENCIA) 23 PERCENT;

--SOCIAL DEMOCRAT (AD, ALIANZA BRAVO PUEBLO) NINE PERCENT;

--MODERATE LEFT (MAS, CAUSA R, ETC.) FOUR PERCENT.

THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN BLOC, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF COPEI, HAS  
A MUCH LOWER NEGATIVE PERCEPTION FROM THE ELECTORATE THAN  
THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT OR MODERATE LEFT BLOC. MOREOVER, ITS  
THREE PRINCIPAL LEADERS, HENRIQUE SALAS ROEMER OF PROYECTO  
AND JULIO BORGES OF PRIMERO JUSTICIA, AND ENRIQUE MENDOZA  
OF COPEI, ARE WELL RESPECTED BY THE RANK-AND-FILE OF OTHER  
SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTIES. KELLER CONCLUDED THAT, IF THE  
SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTIES OF THE CENTER UNITED, THE NEW

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PARTY WOULD BE A FORMIDABLE RIVAL TO CHAVISMO.

8. (U) THESE NUMBERS, IF ACCURATE, ARE NOT GOOD NEWS FOR AD. THE OLD DOMINANT PARTY STILL HAS A VERY NEGATIVE PUBLIC IMAGE (50 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION WILL NOT VOTE FOR IT), HAS LOST MUCH OF ITS TRADITIONAL SUPPORT TO CHAVISMO, AND HAS NO LEADER WHO RIVALS SALAS, BORGES, OR MENDOZA IN POPULAR SUPPORT.

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COMMENT: CHAVEZ IS VENEZUELAN POLITICS  
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9. (C) KELLER'S NUMBERS ON CHAVEZ'S RISING POPULARITY TRACK FAIRLY CONSISTENTLY WITH OTHER POLLS WE'VE SEEN.

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END COMMENT.

COOK.

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